



St. Mac Dara's Community College

RSE Policy

Reviewed and Adopted by Board of Management.

January 2020



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*Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Átha Cliath agus Dhún Laoghaire
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire
Education and Training Board*

St. Mac Dara's Community College

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

THE SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY:

St. Mac Dara's Community College, through a comprehensive education programme, provides as far as possible, educational opportunities to meet the needs of the students. It is a multi-denominational, co-educational college. The following is the Vision statement of St. Mac Dara's.

“We, the community of this College, through a caring and collective approach, aspire to provide a broad-based education for all, to foster respect and dignity, and to promote a safe and just environment by positively encouraging all to realise their full potential”.

DEFINITION OF RSE:

Having accepted the content of the Relationships and Sexuality Education Curriculum as laid down by the Department of Education & Science, the policy of the school is to develop caring, confident and moral individuals who would work together to form a responsible and just community. It is envisaged that the programme will be implemented:

- as a support to parents.
- using age-appropriate materials.

Relationships and sexuality are key elements of healthy social and personal development in all our lives but particularly in the life of an adolescent.

RELATIONSHIP OF RSE TO SPHE:

The Social Personal and Health Education Programme aims to give students clear information, build up their self-esteem, help them to learn to communicate and make decisions and to express feelings in an appropriate way. Relationships should be an essential part of this programme and Sexuality Education should take place within this context. It aims to promote a positive attitude to one's sexuality and in one's relationship with others.

WHAT THE SCHOOL CURRENTLY PROVIDES:

- The Wellbeing Programme - At Junior Cycle RSE is one of ten inter-connecting modules of SPHE offered weekly.
- At Senior Cycle an RSE/SPHE is offered weekly to 4th and 6th Years and twice weekly To 5th Years.
- Visiting Lecturers organised by the Career Guidance Dept., Home Economics/Science and Religion - There are certain areas of overlap in these subjects.

THE AIMS OF OUR RSE PROGRAMME:

RSE aims to provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

RSE, which is located in the overall framework of SPHE, has as its specific aims:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude towards one's own sexuality and in one's relationships with others.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Organisation of RSE in St. Mac Dara's

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The RSE programme will be conducted in a spirit of confidentiality. Students will be advised to respect the privacy of others in the classroom in accordance with their class contract. They will also be given opportunities to talk to the teacher, or another member of staff, in confidence, should the need arise. However, if the teacher judges that, in particular circumstances, a student is at risk, it may be necessary, in accordance with Child Protection Policies and the Law, to inform the DLP.

SPECIAL NEEDS - SNS:

Children with additional educational needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. There is regular communication between the SNA Department, the SPHE Co-Ordinator, the Care Team and the DLP. Students that are withdrawn from SPHE class are invited to return to class in order to receive RSE education.

PARENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

This programme is a support to parents as primary educators of their children. All information in relation to the programme is available if requested. Should a parent choose to provide certain aspects of RSE at home their rights will be respected. Parents may wish to withdraw a student from RSE Class and do not have to give a reason for withdrawal, however we would respectfully invite them to do so – allowing us the opportunity to resolve any misunderstandings. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. Notes are placed in school journals informing parents as to when RSE education is taking place.

VISITING SPEAKERS:

Visiting speakers are seen as a valuable asset, e.g. Saoirse, Rape Crisis Centre, BelongTo and Amen. However, the delivery of the school's programme remains the responsibility of the teacher. Any guest speaker will be in conformity with the school's policy on RSE. After gaining approval from the principal, visitors will be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work. Students may on occasion prepare questions in advance so that the students may feel actively involved in the class. The Office should be informed of the date and the name of the visitor. The teacher will not leave the classroom unattended while the visitor is present in the classroom and under no circumstances will details of the child be given to the visitor. Details of the visit will put in school journals and on the school website in advance of the visit. A Visitor Evaluation Survey will be completed by some students' post-visit, with findings sent to the principal.

LGBT COMMUNITY

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that the LGBT Community will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning the LGBT Community is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of LGBT should be appropriate to the age of the pupils. Resource – Growing Up Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.

CONTRACEPTION:

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way. Our aim is to increase student's awareness of the range of available contraceptive methods and to explore communication about contraceptive use in the context of an intimate relationship. Resource – Trust Pack.

RESOURCES:

The school follows the new Health and Wellbeing Course at Junior Level, currently using the Edco Resources. At Senior Level teachers are using the Trust Pack – HSE. Teachers also have access to a combination of DVDs and Videos to support them in the classroom in delivering a successful RSE Class, i.e. www.sphe.ie, RSE Policy, RSE Curriculum Guidelines. Senior Cycle students participate in promoting social and emotional wellbeing, i.e. Mind Out Programme. Senior Cycle students are also introduced to the CAP Pack – Cancer Awareness Pack.

ON-GOING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT:

We agree with the Department of Education's view that parents and teachers should have on-going training and that as representatives of the Board of Management, parents and teachers we see the need for continued support and allocation of resources from the Department. All RSE teachers are encouraged to go on regular in-services in relation to sex education. At Junior Level if a teacher/tutor feels unqualified to deliver the RSE programme a Senior RSE teacher/SPHE Co-Ordinator will take the class. LCVP students are likewise accommodated over six class periods with the collaboration of their LCVP teachers and Programme Co-Ordinator.

Further training includes:

- Senior Cycle SPHE
- Junior Cycle (JC) RSE
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- Mental Health 1, 2
- Anti-Bullying
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety (JC & SC)

MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING THE RSE PROGRAMME:

Regularly teachers of Senior RSE would have School Self Evaluations and discuss any possible weaknesses or strengths with the programme. Students also get an opportunity to assess their learning in class. Assessment in RSE should not simply focus on factual knowledge. It should provide opportunities to assess:

- An increase in knowledge (Before I only knew ... now I also know ...)
- An increase in understanding (I always knew But now I can see how it connects to ... and now I can see how I could use this in my life)
- A change or reconfirmation of a belief (I used to feel ... but I now feel ...)
- A richer vocabulary (before I would have said ... but now I can say ...)
- Increased competence in skills (Before I didn't know how to ... but now I know how to)
- New strategies acquired (Before I wouldn't have known how to ... but now I know new/more effective ways to)
- An increased confidence (before I could/would say and do But now I feel I am able to say and do)
- Changed and challenged assumptions (Before I thought that ... but now I realise that was just a myth or a stereotype).

Assessment is evaluated in the following ways:

- Evidence of individual or group work – kept in portfolio.
- Two or three reflective sentences in journal.
- Review of module form at end of topic.
- Assessment days at Christmas and summer - review of term or students chose a piece of work and decide why they like it/are proud of it and write a short reflection.

Parents are equally invited along with Senior Management to discuss any changes if needed. Learning intentions will be displayed in the classroom at the beginning of class. Details of helplines and agencies will also be displayed should further assistance be required.

This policy has been developed and reviewed by the SPHE Co-Ordinator, the Care Team, the Student's Council, Senior Management and the Parents' Association. It is has been made available to school personnel and is published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management every second school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Department.

Terms used above are prescribed by the HSE and the Department of Education.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 28/1/2020.

Signed: Pamela Keane
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 28/1/2020

Signed: Derek Ward
Principal & Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 28/1/2020

